



The curious drive along San Francisco's Haight St. to view hippies. (Los Angeles Times Photo by Steve Fontanini)

Hippies Create New Way Of Life

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Allen Cohen, a hairy-faced poet with shoulder length hair, advocates communal living, love and the use of LSD. He symbolizes the feelings and habits of 4,000 other young hippies in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.

"What you're witnessing here is history," said Cohen.

"And," added Ron Thelin, nervously twisting his golden mustache, "if the projections are correct, there will be 50,000 to 100,000 more kids here to share our 'summer of love.'"

Cohen and Thelin claim they are not leaders, but willingly speak for the hippy "tribe." They preach love. Most of the hippies have tried LSD, marijuana or other psychedelic drugs at least once in their attempts to understand themselves, God or love.

These long-haired young men and their women have transformed Haight-Ashbury into a way of life. And they claim their life is a new religion, the religion of love.

Their Bohemian attitudes, unkempt dress and free-wheeling sex habits have caused a split in an Episcopal church that gave them a headquarters. Their communal living habits have caught the attention of the city health department.

Their use of drugs and the fact that runaway teenagers find a haven among hippies keep them in constant conflict

Cohen, 26, is editor of the Oracle, an "underground" newspaper which openly prescribes LSD, marijuana, peyote and other mind-altering drugs for young people who want to "drop out"—remove themselves from "the establishment" (society).

Thelin says he has "a thing for Indians" and follows the religious and social practices of early American Indians. He wears a beaded satchel hanging from his shoulder and somewhat resembles Buffalo Bill Cody.

Hippies don't like to be called hippies.

"That's just a word," said Cohen. "You mix with us and then decide what to call us."

"Yeh, man," added a bearded friend, "but don't stay more than a week or you won't leave."

Health department officials fear that overcrowding the hippy "pads" will cause spread of disease. Police say hippies harbor teenagers who have left home.

Health inspectors checked housing in the 15-block Haight-Ashbury district recently. They issued 65 citations for housing and sanitation violations, 16 of them to hippy "pads."

"Those that were bad were really bad," said John Kelterer, chief health inspector. "But conditions we found were not as bad as we had been led to believe they were."

ns have caught the attention of the police. Their use of drugs and the fact that runaway teen-agers find a haven among hippies keep them in constant conflict with police.

Cohen and Thelin stood in a disheveled room behind Thelin's psychedelic book shop on Haight St. as rain dripped through the ceiling, and tried to explain their new subculture.

Critics say hippies, aside from their drug habits, don't work and don't contribute anything to a community.

"We are," said Cohen, "creating a new kind of art, a new kind of human relationship and a new family relationship."

Art displayed in Haight St. shops is flashy, with colors that show the psychedelic influence and a preoccupation with sex and God.

The "tribe," as the hippies call their community as a whole, includes students of Zen Buddhism, followers of mystical Hindu and Chinese religions and practitioners of American Indian religious rituals.

"With us," said Sharon Sweeney, a young blond from Minnesota, "religion is a personal thing. It's inside; not conventional."

Beside their hair and beards, the men go in for Indian beads, pierced ears, cowboy boots, sandals, tight trousers, buckskin jackets, colored feathers in their hair, symbolic Indian headbands, ponchos and serapes.

Their women wear bright dresses and beads or tight pants. Many go barefoot. Those who have children dress them just as colorfully.

Men and women wear small bells on their belts or ankles. They walk the streets at all hours, day and night, sit over coffee in the numerous coffee houses that have sprung up along their street. Their conversation is about "acid" (LSD), "grass" (marijuana) or the latest arrival in "Hashberry," their term for Haight-Ashbury.

Thelin's place is typical of the dozen or so art and poster shops that have opened since January to cater to the hippies. Their unusual tastes have changed the 60-year-old buildings into brightly painted shops and apartments. Dogs and children romp through the streets freely.

"What's the difference between us and beatniks?" asked a Negro girl in the rain-soaked bookshop. "We don't wear black and we're cleaner."

She wore a bright Mexican serape and square green glasses. Her white boy friend rubbed her shoulders affectionately.

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"Most of these kids," another health department official said, "are nice, passive kids. They believe in what they're trying to do. But there are those who mix in the community who see their association with hippies as an opportunity to be unclean or unshaven."

Cohen and Thelin refer to the expected summer influx of young hippies as "a pilgrimage from all over the country."

But, a spokesman for Police Chief Thomas Cahill said, "We don't know where that figures of 100,000 came from. All we know is what we see in the press; but it's our guess that this is something a hippie dreamed up."

"Hashberry" is a world that covers only 15 city blocks near the southeastern edge of Golden Gate Park west of downtown San Francisco. In their world, the hippies are nearly surrounded by residential areas, predominantly Negro. Police fear a summer influx of hippies could touch off racial unrest.

It is their sexual promiscuity and unorthodox approach to religion that caused trouble at All Saints Episcopal Church, one block off Haight St.

There, a group calling themselves "the Diggers"—hippies who provide free food, clothing and shelter for other hippies—were given an office by the rector, the Rev. Leon Harris. Senior Warden Donald Carlson, the church's lay officer, and William James, master of acolytes (altar boys) resigned soon after the Diggers moved in.

"When a group of people reject the moral code of our society (curse and swear, are admitted fornicators, are physically unclean, reject—if not despise—the law, etc.), I believe they are un-Christian and immoral," Carlson wrote in his resignation letter.

Bishop C. Kilmer Myers of the Episcopal diocese backed Father Harris' decision.

Merchants who were on Haight St. before the hippies began arriving about a year ago defend the subculture. Larry Christiani, a florist, said their presence has both helped and hurt business.

"The tourists and gawkers have crowded into the area so much lately," he said, "that there are no parking places. But these kids are good kids. They don't steal and they don't fight. But the barefooted ones should wash their feet more often."